



# Harford County Stormwater Pollution Prevention

## OUTDOOR WASHING

Outdoor washing of vehicles, equipment, buildings, roadways, and parking lots can cause stormwater pollution. Wash water may contain chlorine, salts, sediments, phosphorous, metals, surfactants, chlorinated hydrocarbons, oil and grease, and other pollutants that can degrade water quality. Dirty wash water that is not properly managed can lead to water contamination in surface water streams and even groundwater aquifers.



### Pollution Prevention Techniques for Outdoor Washing and Cleaning

- ✓ Perform all washing operations indoor if possible. If outdoor washing is necessary, do not allow any wash water to enter the storm drain system.
- ✓ Ideally, all vehicles and equipment should be washed at commercial car washes or indoor facilities that are specially designed for washing operations and that recycle, treat, or convey wash to the sanitary sewer system.
- ✓ Contain, control, and capture all outdoor wash water. Utilize oil separators and ensure that wash water is directed toward the sanitary sewer system and that it never discharges into the street, gutter, or storm drain.
- ✓ An outdoor washing operation should take place in a designated wash area on a paved impervious surface such as concrete and on wash pad that has a containment system to contain the wash water. The area should be sloped so that wash water is collected and discharged to the sanitary sewer system, holding tank, or dead-end sump pump and away from the storm drain system.
- ✓ Utilize temporary berms, storm drain covers, drain plugs, or other containment systems. Do not discharge wash water into subsurface disposal systems such as septic systems, dry wells or seepage pits.
- ✓ Label storm drains with "No Dumping, Drains to Chesapeake Bay" signs to prevent wash water drainage to inlets.
- ✓ Eliminate aromatic and chlorinated hydrocarbons from vehicle-washing operations. Use biodegradable, phosphate-free, water-based soaps. Do not use solvents. Avoid using cleaning products that contain hazardous substances such as hydrofluoric acid, sodium hydroxide, bleach, muriatic acid, etc.
- ✓ Minimize water use. Utilize flow-restricted nozzles that automatically turn off when left unattended. Use a spray nozzle or bucket when possible to conserve water and minimize wash water.
- ✓ Avoid steam cleaning and engine and undercarriage washing which produces high pollutant concentrations
- ✓ Train employees on proper techniques to confine washing operations and prevent pollution.
- ✓ If pressure washing to clean surfaces such as equipment, parking lots, sidewalks, or buildings, collect the wash water and debris and properly dispose of each in the sanitary sewer system and garbage. Pressure washing and capture can reduce the amount of pollutants that may end up in waterways during a heavy rain event.
- ✓ Frequently sweep outside areas to prevent build of and wash away of debris. Clean up the wash area by using rags for small spills, a damp mop for general clean up, and dry absorbent material for larger spills.